Legislation for the Welfare of Agricultural Workers

245. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal under their consideration to enact a legislation for the welfare of agricultural workers numbering 100 million; if so, the details thereof;

(b) by when it is likely to be passed; and

(c) the reasons for the delay in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government proposes to introduce a Bill for regulation of employment and working condition of agricultural workers and to provide for certain welfare measures to them. The legislation would benefit 135 million workers in agriculture and allied activities.

(b) and (c) The introduction of the Bill in the Parliament is awaiting completion of procedural requirements including Cabinet approval. The delay so far has been due to the complexity and enormity of the task as also on account of the views of the State Governments arising out of widely varying agro-climatic conditions, agricultural practices and employer-employee relationship prevailing in different States.

Tackling the child labour

246. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether any significant steps have been taken to tackle child labour in various sectors in 1996-97;

(b) if so, the impact of such measures; and

(c) the fresh initiatives proposed in 1997-98 to tackle this social menace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) A major programme was announced in August 1994 for the rehabilitation of around 2 million children working in hazardous occupations through a project approach. So far 76 National Child Labour Projects have been set up under the programme for the rehabilitation of 1.5 lakh children. These projects continued to be funded during 1996-97. As per the available information, around 1.05 lakh children are already enrolled in the special schools set up under the projects.

(c) While the Government was still considering extension of the programme to other districts, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in their judgement 10.12.96 issued several directions regarding the manner in which the children working in hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn and rehabilitated as also the manner in which the working conditions of children working in non hazardous occupations are to be improved and regulated. The directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, *inter alia*, include conduct of survey to identify the working children, payment of compensation @Rs. 20,000 per child by the offending employers for employment of children in the hazardous occupations and provision of education to children working in non-hazardous occupations at employers' cost. The implementation of the directions of the Court is expected to help in tackling the problem of child labour.

Improvement of Working Conditions of Beedi Labour

247. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMI: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any legislation to improve working conditions of beedi workers;

(b) whether Government are responsible for ensuring its compliance for improvement of working conditions of beedi labour;

(c) whether any focus has been brought on this subject;

(d) whether any study has been conducted during 1996-97 on the effectiveness of the legislation for welfare of beedi workers; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) A statement is annexed *(See* below).

(d) No such study has been commissioned by the Government or has come to its notice during 1996-97.

(e) Does not arise.

Statement

(a) Yes Sir. The Beedi & Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 has been enacted specifically to provide for the welfare of beedi workers, to regulate conditions of their work and to safeguard their interests. Moreover, in order to finance measures to promote welfare of beedi workers, the Central Government have enacted the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976 and to provide for the levy and collection by way of cess, the Beedi Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1976 has been enacted.

(b) and (c) The enforcement of the Beedi & Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 is the responsibility of the State Governments and they have been advised, from time to time, to ensure its strict compliance. The administrations of the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund set up under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976 is the responsibility of the Central Government which administers the Fund for the purpose of providing various welfare measures to beedi workers and the working of this Fund is reviewed from time to time by the Central and State Advisory Committees set up under the Fund.

Closure of Industries/Factories

248. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the number of industrial units/factories closed during each of the last three years and on what grounds;

(b) to what extent there has been unemployment on account of these closures;

(c) what was the total employment in the industrial sector during each of the last three years; and

(d) what was the total number of unemployed during each of the last three years and what measures have been taken to remove unemployment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) According to information made available from Labour Bureau, Shimla the number of units closed during 1994, 1995 and 1996 were 228, 183 and 204 respectively. The main causes for these closures were financial stringency, lack of demand for products, shortage of raw-materials, shortage of power, demand for higher wages and allowances, indiscipline and violence, inter/intra union rivalries, etc.

(b) The workers affected due to closure of these units during 1994, 1995 and 1996 were 21394, 14495 and 11390 respectively.

(c) Employment in the organised sector by major industries on 31st March of the years 1994, 1995 and 1996 was 273.75, 275.25 and 279.41 lakhs respectively.

(d) According to the live register of employment exchanges in the country, the total number of jobseekers as on 31st dec. of 1994, 1995 and 1996 were 266.91, 367.42 and 374.30 lakhs. The Ninth Plan aims at generating greater employment through the growth process by concentrating on sectors, sub-sectors and tech-